

APPENDIX I

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON CHRISTIAN ZIMMERMAN'S POTATO FARM (Probably from Delaware State News)

Potential Potato Empire Is Now Being Built On 'Crazy Dream' Of Transplanted Long Islander

Dover—A potential potato empire is slowly being built in Delaware—which someday may be among the state's leading agricultural industries—all because a Long Island tater grower accomplished his "crazy dream" of raising potatoes in Delaware when he moved to a nearby dairy farm six years ago.

Now retired, Chris Zimmerman has acquired much of the land belonging to neighbors who in 1944 gave him less than a year to survive.

From what seemed to others as the impossible, Chris Zimmerman fathered a new, expanding Delaware agricultural industry, and created a quality potato which commands premium market prices and is even putting the famed "Idaho" to shame. Even the agriculture experts are shaking their heads at the amazing bumper crop yields that are piling up year after year.

In 1944, he decided to leave that old potato growing area and strike out anew. For over a half of a century Zimmerman had been raising potatoes. He had worked on his father's potato farm, and, after peeling enough of the spuds in the first World War, he decided to grow potatoes on his own.

The costs of raising potatoes in Long Island were rapidly increasing as the land prices rose with New Yorkers seeking less congested areas. Zimmerman sold his East Setauket farm to a real estate development and packed his family into a car to start anew on the 164-acre dairy farm he had purchased just South of here on Highway 113.

When Zimmerman settled on the Kent County land and told his neighbors of his plans for growing potatoes, they laughed. No one grew potatoes in Delaware, except the few scattered farmers who seeded an acre or two just as an extra crop and in a "hit-or-miss" manner.

Even the U.S. agriculture agencies were surprised to find a Delaware potato grower. When Zimmerman applied for a share of the federal crop support program during his first year, the agriculture department took months to determine whether Delaware was included in the program. It wasn't until his second year that they

discovered Delaware was allotted 143 acres under a crop support program, and so they gave him more than half of the allotted acreage.

Zimmerman carefully inspected the Delaware soil when he settled here. Of his 164 acres, 120 were tillable. "There was only one thing it needed," he said, "a land builder—a good fertilizer." Carefully selecting good seed potatoes from the New England states, Zimmerman planted 55 acres his first year. His yield averaged 250 bushels an acre, almost as much as the yield in Long Island, despite a dry season.

The next year, the Government allotted him 75 acres. Zimmerman added his fertilizer to the soil, turned under his cover crop of grain, and included in his process

a system of irrigation. An overhead water sprinkler system, which was moveable, showered 20 potato rows at a time. With his irrigation system, Zimmerman's yield increased to 350 bushels per acre.

"I had a good run of potatoes that year," the farmer said. "And I found a market for them, too." It wasn't like the first year when nobody would buy my potatoes. This crop was clean, with no disease or grub and not even one per cent of 'pick-outs' (bad potatoes). Almost all of them were from two to four inches—No. 1 quality."

It wasn't long before Zimmerman's success in 1945 had reached the ears of potato growers in Long Island. A few others came to Delaware to try their luck on Kent county farms, too. And in 1946, the government cut Zimmerman's allotment from 75 acres to 40 acres at price support as other farmers wanted to get into the Delaware program.

The University of Delaware's agriculture school became interested in Zimmerman's potato growing "experiment" in 1946 and decided to experiment also on his farm. Zimmerman permitted them to produce a trial plot under controlled conditions using two different types of dust. Trying D.D.T. dust on potato crops for the first time anywhere in comparison to the results of the regular dust, called "25-25-50," the ag school found that Zimmerman's yield on the experimental plots was an unbelievable 612 bushels per acre with the new D.D.T. compared to 512 bushels per acre with the old type dust.

Potato growers heralded the discovery of the D.D.T. dust, and at the same time the university reports brought to Delaware other farmers who wanted to try their farming abilities on land which produced a yield almost double to that of normal potato growing farms.

"Each year I fertilized, the yield increased about 100 bushels per acre," Zimmerman explained. I got from 25 to 50 per cent and almost doubled the yield per acre that I got on the Long Island farms."

From the 55 acres of potatoes he
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Chris Zimmerman

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started in 1944. Zimmermah now controls over 350 acres of potato crop in Kent county, grown on almost 650 acres of land he now owns. Although he retired from the potato business last year, his four sons have followed in his footsteps to open up nearby farms, rented from their father.

His oldest son, Christian E. Zimmerman, operates a 180 acre farm with over a 100-acre potato crop just below his father's place. Henry Zimmerman rents a 140 acre farm, growing more than 90 acres of potatoes. Frank Zimmerman plants 60 acres under the federal support program. And the latest son to enter the field, is Joseph, 20, who rents a 140-acre farm near Magnolia and this spring will plant his first crop of potatoes.

Zimmerman has seen his potato enterprise spring up throughout Kent county. Last year there were more than 1,200 acres of potatoes under cultivation in the county, produced by about 25 farmers, all of whom followed Zimmerman from Long Island.

"It's a good business, because Delaware soil is producing a fine quality potato," Zimmerman said. "Last year we sold our potatoes on the open market for \$1 a bushel more than the price support. We had no sooner harvested our crop than potato buyers from New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey bought it up, paying a premium of from 25 to 50 cents more per 100 bags over other state's potatoes.

"Delaware potatoes are mostly top quality grade, ranging as No. 1 size, from 1½ inches to over 4 inches. Few are below that size or No. 2 grade. They are certainly better than the Long Island potatoes and those of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and for their type they are better than the Idaho potatoes," he commented.

With potato farmers preparing to plant their crops next month, Zimmerman predicted a record harvest for Delaware in late June. "We've had more rainfall this winter," he said, "and we're getting more potato farmers." Four other Long Island farmers have purchased farms near Smyrna to begin a crop this year.

Last year the potato growers organized into a Kent County Potato Growers Association. Among their first efforts was to popularize Delaware potatoes by giving them a name. This year, all Delaware potatoes will be sent out in bags bearing the name "Diamond State" potatoes.

"This growing industry is scaring our neighbors," Zimmerman remarked. "It looks like we are being forced into a federal marketing agreement with Maryland, and Delaware potato growers don't want a marketing agreement to be told what sizes of potatoes they can sell or how much they can raise."

Zimmerman was referring to a recent move of the U. S. agriculture department to determine if a referendum should be taken on the need

for a marketing agreement between Delaware and Maryland for the marketing of potatoes. A few weeks ago Delaware potato growers attended a meeting at Salisbury, Md., under the auspices of the Maryland-Delaware Potato Growers Association (which incidentally has no members representing Delaware), at which the agriculture department presented plans for the marketing agreement.

Delaware potato growers protested the movement, pointing out that practically all of the Delaware growers are compelled to sell on the open market because the government only allows price support on 143 acres. It was further pointed out that representation on the marketing board would include only two Delawareans to five Marylanders who constitute more than a majority membership and who are protected by larger allotments under the price support program.

Commenting on this marketing agreement, Zimmerman said it was designed to keep small potatoes from the markets. "There are some people, who can't afford to buy big potatoes. If we had to hold back and dump all of the small potatoes, we'd be losing a lot of money, since most of the growers get no government support. Furthermore, we came here to grow potatoes, not gardens."

Zimmerman said that the cost of growing potatoes per acre is from \$200 to \$300. Last year the Delaware potatoes marketed about \$1.25-\$1.50 per bushel on the open market, about a \$1 per 100 bags higher than the government parity prices.

Meanwhile, Delaware's potato business is still in its infancy. While more and more Long Island growers are coming here to start new farms, Delaware farmers are slow in accepting this new crop. "They don't call me crazy, now," said Zimmerman, "but still they don't believe that this potato growing could have been done. Maybe that's why more of them haven't tried it here in Delaware."

Although, Delaware potatoes are taking their place on the market at premium prices, in order to really produce a large industry here at least 10,000 acres of potatoes will have to be under cultivation. "It won't be long," remarked Zimmerman, "before all of the Long Island growers decide to move down here as they face high production costs."

Over Farmer Harvests Largest Potato Yield Ever Known In Kent

Chris Zimmerman, of near Dover, is harvesting the largest yield per acre of potatoes ever known in Kent County. His yield on his 75 acres of potatoes is averaging in the neighborhood of 450 bushels to the acre. Some of his Irish Cobblers, Green Mountains, and Kathadins are running so uniform that they are being sacked in the field and are grading U. S. No. 1 throughout.

Kent County Agent William Tarbell reports that in one plot on the Zimmerman farm, where the owner cooperated with the Extension Service in a demonstration on the Kathadin variety of a new combination of a fungicide and insecticide developed by the Delaware Experiment Station, the yield was 62½ bushels per acre. A plot treated with the present standard treatment yielded 512½ bushels.